



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1976

Extracted on Apr-20-2024 08:52:34

The Smithsonian Institution thanks all digital volunteers that transcribed and reviewed this material. Your work enriches Smithsonian collections, making them available to anyone with an interest in using them.

The Smithsonian Institution (the "Smithsonian") provides the content on this website (transcription.si.edu), other Smithsonian websites, and third-party sites on which it maintains a presence ("SI Websites") in support of its mission for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian invites visitors to use its online content for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using this website, you accept and agree to abide by the [following terms](#).

- If sharing the material in personal and educational contexts, please cite the National Museum of African American History and Culture as source of the content and the project title as provided at the top of the document. Include the accession number or collection name; when possible, link to the National Museum of African American History and Culture website.
- If you wish to use this material in a for-profit publication, exhibition, or online project, please contact National Museum of African American History and Culture or transcribe@si.edu

For more information on this project and related material, contact the National Museum of African American History and Culture. [See this project](#) and other collections in the Smithsonian Transcription Center.

WPA, and each hired a Negro with the title of "race relations specialist" or "advisor," or some other such title with the word "race" or "Negro" always in it. Each also became a "specialist" in his appointed field. It made no difference that they didn't have any previous experience, the word "specialist" was included in his title.

Harold L. Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, was considered to be the top liberal in the President's Cabinet. He had formerly been the president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP, and therefore Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, had much influence, and was responsible for most of the appointments Secretary Ickes made, again to the chagrin of the "Big Four." On the advice of White, Ickes established an office of "Advisor to the Secretary on the Economic Status of the Negro." He promptly filled the position with a liberal white from Atlanta, Clark Foreman, whose family owned the Atlanta Constitution. According to Foreman, he was disinherited by his family because of his involvement with Negroes. As his deputy, Foreman named Dr. Robert C. Weaver, who had defected from the Joint Committee on National Recovery [later the National Negro Congress], after having been a co-founder with John P. Davis, William H. Hastie, Benjamin Davis and W. Montague Cobb. The Administration, annoyed with the agitation for the improvement of the Negro status, tore the organization asunder by offering jobs to the most prolific. Only John P. Davis stuck it out until the organization went broke. When that happened it was taken over by a group of left wingers, who changed the name to National Negro Congress, at a convention held in Chicago at a Black Regiment Armory.

Many Negro organizations, including the Negro press, could not understand why Ickes would appoint a white person to advise him on the economic status of Negroes. They pointed out that Bob Weaver, with a Ph.D degree in economics from Harvard University, and Foreman's associate, was more eminently qualified. Foreman, fed up with this type of propaganda, quit, and the position went to Weaver.

Weaver promptly appointed as his assistant, John P. Murchison, a professor of economics at Howard University, and Dewey R. Jones, a newspaper man with the Chicago Defender. Weaver jockeyed from pillar to post, landing practically every position earmarked for a Negro that was better than the one he was currently holding. After all, who was the best prepared when opportunity knocked? A Negro Ph.D was a rarity in those days, and from Harvard yet! And so he became special assistant to the administrator of the United States Housing Authority, being later succeeded in that post by William J. Trent, Jr. But before he left to become an assistant to Sidney Hillman in the office of the Defense commission, he had appointed Frank Home, another bloom from Harvard University with a Ph.D degree, as an "Assistant for Negro Labor," and Henry Lee Moon as an "assistant for Negro press relations." Weaver gained enough experience during the Roosevelt years to acquire a specialization in the field of housing. Moving to New York, he became the State Commissioner of Housing under Governor Averell Harriman, and a Commissioner of the Housing Development Administration under Mayor Robert F. Wagner. After a brief stint as Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, by appointment of President Kennedy, he moved on to the mountain top, when President Johnson appointed him Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, making him the first Black to become a member of any President's cabinet.

WPA, and each hired a Negro with the title of "race relations specialist" or "advisor," or some other such title with the word "race" or "Negro" always in it. Each also became a "specialist" in his appointed field. It made no difference that they didn't have any previous experience, the word "specialist" was included in his title.

Harold L. Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, was considered to be the top liberal in the President's Cabinet. He had formerly been the president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP, and therefore Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, had much influence, and was responsible for most of the appointments Secretary Ickes made, again to the chagrin of the "Big Four." On the advice of White, Ickes established an office of "Advisor to the Secretary on the Economic Status of the Negro." He promptly filled the position with a liberal white from Atlanta, Clark Foreman, whose family owned the Atlanta Constitution. According to Foreman, he was disinherited by his family because of his involvement with Negroes. As his deputy, Foreman named Dr. Robert C. Weaver, who had defected from the Joint Committee on National Recovery [later the National Negro Congress], after having been a co-founder with John P. Davis, William H. Hastie, Benjamin Davis and W. Montague Cobb. The Administration, annoyed with the agitation for the improvement of the Negro status, tore the organization asunder by offering jobs to the most prolific. Only John P. Davis stuck it out until the organization went broke. When that happened it was taken over by a group of left wingers, who changed the name to National Negro Congress, at a convention held in Chicago at a Black Regiment Armory.

Many Negro organizations, including the Negro press, could not understand why Ickes would appoint a white person to advise him on the economic status of Negroes. They pointed out that Bob Weaver, with a Ph.D degree in economics from Harvard University, and Foreman's associate, was more eminently qualified. Foreman, fed up with this type of propaganda, quit, and the position went to Weaver.

Weaver promptly appointed as his assistant, John P. Murchison, a professor of economics at Howard University, and Dewey R. Jones, a newspaper man with the Chicago Defender. Weaver jockeyed from pillar to post, landing practically every position earmarked for a Negro that was better than the one he was currently holding. After all, who was the best prepared when opportunity knocked? A Negro Ph.D was a rarity in those days, and from Harvard yet! And so he became special assistant to the administrator of the United States Housing Authority, being later succeeded in that post by William J. Trent, Jr. But before he left to become an assistant to Sidney Hillman in the office of the Defense commission, he had appointed Frank Home, another bloom from Harvard University with a Ph.D degree, as an "Assistant for Negro Labor," and Henry Lee Moon as an "assistant for Negro press relations." Weaver gained enough experience during the Roosevelt years to acquire a specialization in the field of housing. Moving to New York, he became the State Commissioner of Housing under Governor Averell Harriman, and a Commissioner of the Housing Development Administration under Mayor Robert F. Wagner. After a brief stint as Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, by appointment of President Kennedy, he moved on to the mountain top, when President Johnson appointed him Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, making him the first Black to become a member of any President's cabinet.

In rapid order these other Negroes became members of the "petty bourgeoisie": William H. Rouse, assistant secretary, Department of the Interior; Theodore Foster, Office of War Information; Andrew Collins, Office of Education; Capt. Louis McHenry Howe, Department of Justice; L. Lawrence Gray, Department of Labor; Sherman Byrnes, Department of Agriculture; Isaac B. Thomas, Department of Commerce; Cyril Cyril Fawcett, Office of Civilian Defense; Edgar Snow, Office of Americanization; Isaac B. Thomas, Department of Labor; Dr. Joseph H. Rouse, Department of Commerce; Dean William P. Cullen, Treasury Department; Dr. Isaac B. Thomas, U. S. Health Service; James R. [Bilbrey?] Jackson, Department of Commerce; Dr. Eugene Kinckle Jones, who took leave as Executive Director of the National Urban League, to become head of the new Bureau of Negro Affairs within the Department

of Commerce; and, of course, the formidable Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of the National Council of Negro Women, and president of the National Council of Negro Women.

Mrs. Bethune had developed a knack of getting in to see Mrs. Roosevelt at the White House, while Walter White, then executive secretary of the NAACP, was in the cook's quarters, in the basement of the White House, chatting with Claude McOffie, the President's Negro valet and barber, and the closest a Negro could get to the President at that time. Move on that later. Through Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Bethune was introduced to Harvey Williams, the white head of the National Youth Administration (NYA). Mrs. Roosevelt persuaded Mr. Williams to take Mrs. Bethune as one of his assistants to advise with respect to Negro youth. Noting that dinner hours within the NYA were being paid higher salaries than that provided for her, Mrs. Bethune, a skipper to the end, proceeded to create a division of her own - the Division of Negro Affairs, and insisted that she be compensated in the same amount as the other six dinner meals, and with the help of her friend, Mrs. Roosevelt. She was done, taking Frank Home with her, she proceeded to organize a staff which would make her operation a division in fact as well as in name.

In the first year of her Division, Mrs. Bethune traveled more than 40,000 miles visiting 78 centers in 21 states preaching the gospel of interracial cooperation, the recognition of Negro needs, and the efficacy of trained Negro leadership. As a result of her activities, she was responsible more than any other individual for the full adoption of an agency. She prodded the other Negroes who would be or could be in responsible positions to "go thou and do likewise."

Mrs. Bethune used her influence and friendship with Mrs. Roosevelt not for herself, but for others. Because of that relationship she closed out in prestige and had a personal connection with practically every high New Deal official. With that prestige and those connections, she became the guiding light among the higher New Deal Negroes, and turned them into a Federal Council, which became popularly known as the "Black Cabinet." She installed herself as chairman; Bob Weaver as Vice Chairman and Arthur Fausch as secretary. She admitted the Black poet as her holder such as Dr. Thurgood as members, but he then held no office. She didn't want the group turned into a political machine.

So that the political office holders could not run back and tell "Mr. Joe" or anyone else what the Negroes were thinking and planning, she kept so much out, as a matter of fact, wouldn't allow any interference to be printed. She became fondly known as and called "Mother Bethune" by members of the Black Cabinet, many of whom could hear at their mother conference, and in conference would report to her on their showmanship rather than their bureaucratic bones.

Walter White was never able to elicit a strong hold on the President or any high official at the White House during Roosevelt's first term. Mr. Roosevelt, when he became President, brought in the White House with him the man who had been his valet and barber while Governor of New York. His name was Claude McOffie. He permitted Claude to bring along to live with him in the White House, his wife, Elizabeth, and had Mrs. Roosevelt suggest her as her personal maid.

Walter would be seen visiting the McOffies in the basement quarters of the chief cook; she would talk to McOffie as if he was talking to the President himself, with the thought in mind that McOffie, while bringing the President's hair one morning, or while preparing him for bed, would impart White's thinking on grave social issues. When he learned that the rule was not permitted to do this, he wrote a note to the President asking to see him, and gave it to McOffie to give to the President after he had tried through regular channels and been turned down by Marvin McIntyre, the President's appointment secretary.

McOffie passed the note on to the President who told McIntyre to arrange for Walter to see him. McIntyre wanted to know if the President knew he came to know of Mr. White's desire, and was told that it came through McOffie. In less than a week, McOffie found

(Continued on following page) 77

In rapid order these other Negroes became members of the "petty bourgeoisie:" William H. Hastie, assistant solicitor, Department of the Interior; Theodore Poston, Office of War Information; Ambrose Caliver, Office of Education; Capt. Louis Mehlinger, Department of Justice; Lt. Lawrence Oxley, Department of Labor; Sherman Briscoe, Department of Agriculture; Jessie O. Thomas, Department of Commerce; Crystal Byrd Fausett, Office of Civilian Defense; Edgar Brown, Civilian Conservation Corps; Thomasina Johnson Norford, Department of Labor; Dr. Joseph Houchins, Department of Commerce; Dean William Pickens, Treasury Department; Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, U. S. Health Service; James A. [Billboard] Jackson, Department of Commerce; Dr. Eugene Kinckle Jones, who took leave as Executive Director of the National Urban League, to become head of the new Division of Negro Affairs within the Department of Commerce; and, of course, the inimitable Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of the Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Fla., and president of the National Council of Negro Women.

Mrs. Bethune had developed a knack of getting in to see Mrs. Roosevelt at the White House, while Walter White, then executive secretary of the NAACP, was in the cook's quarters, in the basement of the White House, chatting with Claude McDuffy, the President's Negro valet and barber, and the closest a Negro could get to the President at that time. More on that later. Through Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Bethune was introduced to Aubrey Williams, the white head of the National Youth Administration [NYA]. Mrs. Roosevelt persuaded Mr. Williams to take Mrs. Bethune on as one of his assistants to advise with respect to Negro youth. Noting that division heads within the NYA were being paid higher salaries than that provided for her, Mrs. Bethune, a scrapper to the end, proceeded to create a division of her own - the Division of Negro Affairs, and insisted that she be compensated in the same amount as the other six division heads, and with the help of her friend, Mrs. Roosevelt, this was done. Taking Frank Horne with her, she proceeded to organize a staff which would make her operation a division in fact as well as in name.

In the first year of her Division, Mrs. Bethune travelled more than 40,000 miles visiting 70 centers in 21 states preaching the gospel of interracial cooperation, the recognition of Negro needs, and the efficacy of trained Negro leadership. As a result of her activities, she was responsible more than any other individual for the full integration of an agency. She prodded the other Negroes who would be or could be in responsible positions to "go thou and do likewise."

Mrs. Bethune used her influence and friendship with Mrs. Roosevelt not for herself, but for others. Because of that relationship she stood out in prestige and had a personal connection with practically every high New Deal official. With that prestige and those connections, she became the guiding spirit among higher New Deal Negroes, and formed them into a Federal Council, which became popularly known as the "Black Cabinet." She installed herself as chairman; Bob Weaver as Vice Chairman and Dutton Ferguson as secretary. She admitted the Black political office holders such as Dr. Thompson as members, but let them hold no office. She didn't want the group turned into a political machine.

So that the political office holders could not run back and tell "Mr. Jim" or anyone else what the Negroes were thinking and planning, she kept no minutes and, as a matter of fact, wouldn't allow any letterheads to be printed. She became fondly known as and called "Mother Bethune" by

members of the Black Cabinet, many of whom used her as their mother confessor, and in confusion would report to her on their stewardship rather than their bureaucratic bosses.

Walter White was never able to obtain a strong hold on the President or any high official at the White House during Roosevelt's first term. Mr. Roosevelt, when he became President, brought to the White House with him the man who had been his valet and barber while Governor of New York. His name was Claude McDuffie. He permitted Claude to bring along to live with him in the White House, his wife, Elizabeth, and had Mrs. Roosevelt engage her as her personal maid.

Walter would be seen visiting the McDuffies in the basement quarters of the chief cook. she would talk to McDuffie as if he was talking to the President himself, with the thought in mind that McDuffie, while trimming the President's hair one morning, or while preparing him for bed, would impart White's thinking on grave social issues. When he learned that the valet was not permitted to do this, he wrote a note to the President asking to see him, and gave it to McDuffie to give to the President after he had tried through regular channels and been turned down by Marvin McIntyre, the President's appointment secretary.

McDuffie passed the note on to the President who told McIntyre to arrange for Walter to see him. McIntyre wanted to know of the President how he came to know of Mr. White's desire, and was told that it came through McDuffie. In less than a week, McDuffie found

(Continued on following page)



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

Join us!

The Transcription Center: <https://transcription.si.edu>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianTranscriptionCenter>

On Twitter: [@TranscribeSI](https://twitter.com/TranscribeSI)

Connect with the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institution: www.si.edu

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Smithsonian>

On Twitter: [@smithsonian](https://twitter.com/smithsonian)